



Department of Justice

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HIGH-RANKING MEMBER OF COLOMBIAN FARC NARCO-TERRORIST ORGANIZATION EXTRADITED TO U.S. ON DRUG CHARGES

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales, Assistant Attorney General Christopher A. Wray of the Criminal Division and DEA Administrator Karen P. Tandy announced today that a high-ranking member of the designated foreign terrorist organization Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, or FARC, has been extradited by the government of Colombia to the United States to face prosecution on drug charges.

Nayibe Rojas Valderama, a/k/a “Sonia” and “Omaira Rojas Cabrera,” arrived from Colombia yesterday in the Washington metropolitan area. She is scheduled to have an initial appearance at 10 a.m. today in the U.S. District Court in the District of Columbia.

Rojas Valderama was named in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury in the District of Columbia on Dec. 18, 2003, unsealed today, charging her with narcotics trafficking in violation of U.S. law, 21 U.S.C. §§ 952, 959 and 963. The narcotics indictment charges Rojas Valderama and another high-level member of the FARC, Jose Benito Cabrera Cuevas, a/k/a “Fabian Ramirez,” and two international drug traffickers with conspiring to import five kilograms or more of cocaine into the United States and conspiring to manufacture and distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine intending and knowing that the cocaine would be unlawfully imported into the United States. The indictment also seeks the forfeiture of all FARC assets derived from the alleged violations.

A number of FARC members and criminal associates have been charged with terrorism and drug-related crimes in U.S. indictments. In addition to narcotics trafficking, the indictments charge the FARC and its members with, among other crimes, the kidnapping and murder of U.S. citizens. Rojas Valderama is the third FARC member to be extradited from Colombia to the United States.

“The extradition of Rojas Valderama highlights the extraordinary cooperation between the United States and Colombia on the critical issue of cutting off the flow of illegal drugs,” said Attorney General Gonzales. “Together, we will fight the criminals who threaten the safety and security of both of our countries.”

“The FARC is a dangerous organization of terrorists, drug traffickers, kidnappers and murderers,” said Assistant Attorney General Wray. “Our indictments and extradition requests should send a clear message to all who participate in or support their deplorable and criminal violations of U.S. law: We will continue to work tirelessly with our foreign partners to see that you are brought to justice.”

The investigation resulting in these charges and the extradition was led by the Drug Enforcement Administration, working with trial attorneys from the Narcotic and Dangerous Drug

Section (NDDS) of the Criminal Division. The case is being prosecuted in the District of Columbia by NDDS and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. Rojas Valderama's extradition was assisted by the Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs.

"The indictment and extradition of the FARC commander known as 'Sonia' has shown the FARC for what it is: murderous drug profiteers terrorizing their fellow citizens and poisoning Americans with tons of cocaine," said DEA Administrator Tandy. "Sonia's extradition is a victory not only for the people of Colombia and the United States, but for the rule of law."

The charges contained in the indictment are merely allegations. All defendants are presumed innocent until and unless convicted in a court of law.

The FARC, a violent narco-terrorist guerrilla group operating in Colombia, controls large portions of Colombia and finances its violent conflict with the Colombian government by engaging in drug trafficking, augmented by other means including kidnapping and extortion. Drug trafficking is the lifeblood of the FARC because it enables the FARC to acquire weapons, ammunition and equipment necessary to carry on its violent attacks. DEA estimates that the FARC controls approximately 70 percent of the Colombian cocaine trade, and approximately 80 to 90 percent of the cocaine that is shipped to the United States comes from Colombia. The FARC produces and distributes thousands of kilograms per month for export to the United States and other countries. Since at least the early 1960s, the FARC has been violently anti-American and has worked against the interests of the United States, announcing in March 1998 that all U.S. officials are "legitimate military targets."

According to the FARC's own website and Colombian news accounts, Jose Benito Cabrera Cuevas is the leader of the 14th Front of the FARC, and Rojas Valderama was, prior to her arrest, the finance officer for the 14th Front. There are approximately 64 fronts, or guerrilla units, in the FARC. Currently, Cabrera Cuevas is a member of the Central General Staff, the second-highest governing body of the FARC, and he is second-in-command of the Southern Block. The Southern Block is composed of 12 fronts containing approximately 600 to 700 FARC members.

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